



PROJECT NEWS

Workplace Wellness for Immigrant Women

Project Team

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The Project: Workplace Wellness for Immigrant Women

Our research explores occupational health and safety (OHS) concerns for immigrant women and seeks to understand workplace harassment, bullying, and toxic environments on their wellbeing and health. The work will contribute to a fuller, evidence-based understanding of psychosocial hazards for English language learning (ELL) women in the workplace, their experience of these hazards, and how to prevent them. Further, by arriving at a greater understanding of the intersection of systemic and skill-based factors that contribute to, or challenge, workplace wellness, this work will help enhance professional and employer practices.

Partner Perspectives: ActionDignity

Since its inception, ActionDignity has been in the forefront of many initiatives addressing issues of diversity, human rights, racial inequities and public participation. It has built leadership and organizational capacity in Calgary's ethno-cultural communities and enhanced the presence and participation of members of these communities in civic activities, public consultations and elections. It developed innovative approaches that strengthens the role of ethno-cultural communities in the design, access and better delivery of services, domestic violence prevention and neighbourhood strengthening. It also participated in an important research on the impact of changes to public policies especially on immigration.

Community brokers from Action Dignity are playing a key role in connecting our research to ethno-cultural communities throughout the city. They have shared their in-depth knowledge of community needs with the co-creation team, contributed to data collection and analysis, and will be actively involved in the upcoming knowledge mobilization activities.

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Project Update: Co-Creation

We have been working on analyzing our data with the co-creation team since September. The team, which consists of 12 research participants and student research assistants, have been meeting bi-weekly to identify emerging themes, develop recommendations, and shape our knowledge translation plans. By engaging the “end user” – in this case young workers - in the process of analyzing the data, shaping the findings, and designing the resulting actions, co-creation can help mitigate the power imbalances often present in the research/practice divide.

In January, the team had the opportunity to share our preliminary findings with their peers through two Peer-to-Peer sharing sessions held at Bow Valley College. Over the course of two sessions 24 students learned about their OHS rights, discussed intersecting challenges faced by newcomer youth which may prevent them from exercising their rights under the current responsabilization model with its focus on safety voice (see below), and discussed recommendations for employers to improve training and onboarding for new to Canada young workers.

Timeline

Data Collection: April-September 2019

Analysis and Recommendations: August- December 2019

Knowledge Mobilization and Reporting: January-March 2020

Key Concepts: Responsibilization

At the individual level, responsabilization (discussed in our previous newsletter) manifests through the notion of “safety voice.” Safety voice refers to the behavior of speaking up about safety due to perceivably risky situations. An example of safety voice in the workplace is when an employee recognizes they do not know how to perform a required task, voices this to their supervisor, requests the proper machinery or training to be able to do it, and the proper procedures are followed by both employer and employee. However, the reliance of safety voice for safe workplaces is problematic because it assumes the need to exercise voice at work and demand change as opposed to having safe conditions already set up. The speaker is framed as an actor who can be split from workplace power relations, (non) union-status, age, gender, language ability, cultural groups, organizational culture, and the type of employment that someone is embedded in – all of which have a tremendous impact of speaking out behaviours.